

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION PM-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-11 ISO-00 DOE-15 SOE-02 CIAE-00
INR-10 NSAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00
SS-15 PA-01 DOEE-00 ACDA-12 L-03 /087 W
-----021349 042213Z /65

O 041902Z APR 78 ZFD
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8717
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
SECDEF WASH DC
DIA WASH DC
CNO WASH DC
CINCLANTFLT NORFOLK VA
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
USNMR SHAPE BE
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK
COMIDEASTFOR
COMSIXTHFLT
JCS WASH DC

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 12170

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OCLR, US, EG
SUBJECT: NUCLEAR POWERED WARSHIP TRANSITS OF THE SUEZ
CANAL

REF: STATE 097463 DTG 150410Z APR 78

1. SUMMARY: A MEETING WAS HELD 2 MAY IN WHICH RADM
CHEWNING ADDRESSED MEMBERS OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
WITH THE GOAL OF ALLAYING THEIR FEARS CONCERNING US
NPW TRANSITS OF THE SUEZ CANAL' HE STRESSED THE USN
NPW SAFETY RECORD AND EXTENT OF LIABILITY USG WOULD
ACCEPT IN UNLIKELY EVENT OF NUCLEAR RELATED PROBLEMS.

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HE THEN ANSWERED QUESTIONS IN UNCLASSIFIED AREAS AND
AGREED TO SEEK ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING
EXTENT OF LIABILITY AND TYPES OF MONITORING EQUIP-
MENT AVIALABLE COMMERCIALY' A SECOND MEETING WAS
SCHEDULED THE FOLLOWING DAY IN ORDER TO DISCUSS NEW
INFORMATION AND TO STUDY FURTHER USG REQUEST FOR NPW
TRANSITS. END SUMMARY.

2. FIRST MEETING. (SECOND MEETING WILL BE REPORTED BY SEPTTEL). THE VISIT PROPOSED IN REFTTEL FOR RADM CHEWNING TO DISCUSS NPW TRANSITS OF THE CANAL BEGAN WITH A MORNING MEETING WITH AMB ON 2 MAY. A MEETING WAS SCHEDULED FOR 1800 IN THE OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER SO THAT RADM CHEWNING MIGHT TALK WITH MEMBERS OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE. PRESENT BESIDES DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER SULTAN, WERE MAHER ABAZA, THE PRINCIPAL UNDERSECRETARY TO SULTAN; AHMED EFFAT, DIRECTOR ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION; DR IBRAHIM HAMUDA, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR ATOMIC RESEARCH CENTER; GENERAL ABDULLAH, REPRESENTING MINWAR GAMASY; AND NABIL EL ARABY, HEAD OF LEGAL BRANCH OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

3. AMB INTRODUCED RADM CHEWNING, EXPLAINED HIS BACKGROUND, AND INDICATED ADMIRAL HAD BEEN SENT AT SPECIFIC REQUEST OF DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER SULTAN. AMBASSADOR STRESSED THAT ADMIRAL WOULD BE AS HELPFUL AS CIRCUMSTANCES PERMITTED, BUT NOTED THAT HE WOULD NECESSARILY HAVE TO BE LIMITED IN THE AREAS HE COULD DISCUSS.

4. AFTER ADDING HIS WELCOME, DR EFFAT SAID THE GROUP UNDERSTOOD THE LIMITATIONS TO DISCUSSIONS AND NOTED THAT THERE WERE TWO MAIN POINTS OF CONCERN: A NEED FOR EQUIPMENT TO MEASURE NUCLEAR RADIATION AND LIABILITY.
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5. CHEWING THEN GAVE A 20 MINUTE PRESENTATION IN WHICH HE THANKED THE GROUP FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS NPW TRANSITS AND STRESSED THE FOLLOWING POINTS: -

A. NPW DIFFERENT THAN NUCLEAR POWERED COMMERCIAL SHIPS AND OPERATE UNDER DIFFERENT RULES.

B. USN NPW VISIT 41 COUNTRIES AND 6 DEPENDENCIES BASED ON GUARANTIES CONTAINED IN "STANDARD STATEMENT" AND PUBLIC LAW 93-513. (COPIES OF BOTH WERE GIVEN TO SULTAN SOME WEEKS AGO.)

C. BOTH HOUSES CONGRESS APPROVED PL 93-513 AND IT PROVIDES NO-FAULT INSURANCE WITH NO UPPER LIMIT.

D. WE HAVE NOT MADE AND CANNOT MAKE ANY BILATERAL AGREEMENTS ON NPW; WE ARE IN FACT PROHIBITED FROM DOING SO BY US LAWS.

E. WE DO NOT NORMALLY CONDUCT ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING FOR RADIATION IN THE PANAMA CANAL NOR ELSEWHERE, EXCEPT WHERE NUCLEAR POWERED WARSHIPS ARE REPAIRED OR REGULARLY BERTHED.

F. THE NAVAL NUCLEAR PROPULSION PROGRAM HAS NOT HAD A NUCLEAR ACCIDENT IN OVER 23 YEARS OPERATING NPW'S,

TOTALLING OVER 1600 REACTOR YEARS.

G. WE PERMIT FREEDOM OF PASSAGE OF PANAMA CANAL BY NPW WITH ONLY REQUIREMENT THAT THE OPERATING GOVERNMENT GIVE US ASSURANCES OF REACTOR SAFETY, GUARANTEED ASSUMPTION OF LIABILITY AND HAS A DEMONSTRATED RECORD OF SAFE OPERATIONS.

H. THE CHARTER OF IAEA ALLOWS ADDRESSING NUCLEAR POWER FOR MERCHANT SHIPS ONLY, STRESS ONLY, NOT NPW'

I. HE WAS PREPARED TO DISCUSS US ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING IF DESIRED. HE COULD NOT DISCUSS REACTOR ACCIDENT ANALYSIS BUT COULD POINT OUT THAT US NPW'S TRANSIT FREELY IN RESTRICTED CHANNELS SUCH AS THE COOPER RIVER WITH CHARLESTON CITY IN CLOSE PROXIMITY.

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6. A PERIOD OF 40 MINUTES OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOLLOWED DURING WHICH THE FOLLOWING ISSUES WERE RAISED:

A. DR EFFAT EXPRESSED A DESIRE TO TALK ABOUT METHODS OF MONITORING. IT WAS POINTED OUT THAT THE USN NORMALLY

ONLY CGFDUCTS ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AT REPAIR SITES OR WHERE NPW'S ARE REGULARLY BERTHED BECAUSE IT COULD BE DEMONSTRATED THAT THESE WERE THE MOST LIKELY PLACES TO HAVE A PROBLEM AND THAT OTHER AREAS WERE UNNECESSARY. DR EFFAT STATED HE UNDERSTOOD THIS POINT BUT THAT THEY MUST SATISFY THE EGYPTIAN PUBLIC. HE CONTINUED THAT THERE MIGHT NOT BE A NEED TO MONITOR NORMALLY,
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BUT THAT THEY MUST BE ABLE TO CONFIDENTLY KNOW IN THE UNLIKELY SITUATION TALKED ABOUT IN THE STANDARD STATEMENT. HE ASKED IF IT WERE POSSIBLE TO STOP THE REACTOR DURING TRANSIT, AND STATED THAT THE SUEZ CANAL AUTHORITY (SCA) WANTS TO KNOW WHAT TO DO IF THERE IS AN ACCIDENT. RADM CHEWNING INDICATED THAT THE USN COULD NOT TALK ABOUT ACCIDENT ANALYSIS'

B. HAMUDA STATED THAT THEY MUST HAVE SOME MONITORING EQUIPMENT. HE WAS TOLD THAT THERE WERE NO SPECIAL SAFETY PLANS FOR US PORTS VISITED OCCASIONALLY BY NPW'S, AND THAT THE USG COULD NOT PROVIDE MONITORING EQUIPMENT TO ANY COUNTRY AS A CONDITION FOR AN NPW VISIT.

C. DR EFFAT ACKNOWLEDGED THIS, BUT ASKED IF THE USG COULD TELL THEM WHAT COMPANIES MAKE MONITORING EQUIPMENT AND WHAT EQUIPMENT THEIR COUNTRY SHOULD HAVE. HE WAS TOLD THAT A LIST OF SOME EQUIPMENT COMPANIES AND SCHOOLS FOR RADIATION MONITORING TRAINING COULD BE PROVIDED, BUT THAT THE USG COULD NOT PROVIDE A PLAN. EACH COUNTRY MIGHT PERCEIVE ITS NEEDS DIFFERENTLY.

D. HAMUDA ASKED WHAT SHOULD BE THEIR POLICY FOR ANOTHER COUNTRY'S NPW TRANSITING THE SUEZ. HE WAS TOLD THAT THE USG WOULD REQUIRE AND EQUIVALENT TO OUR STANDARD STATEMENT AND PL 93-513 ON SAFETY AND LIABILITY AND A DEMONSTRATED RECORD OF SAFE OPERATION FOR TRANSIT OF THE PANAMA CANAL. IT WAS POINTED OUT THAT THE UNITED KINGDOM GAVE SIMILAR ASSURANCES.

E. EL ARABY STATED THAT HE WAS FROM THE MFA AND WOULD NOT ASK SCIENTIFIC QUESTIONS, BUT WANTED TO KNOW WHAT QUOTE DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS UNQUOTE MEANS REGARDING CLAIMS PROCEDURES. IT WAS EXPLAINED THAT THIS WAS COVERED IN PL 93-513. EL ARABY THEN ASKED WHAT WAS THE USG'S POSITION ON INDIRECT LIABILITY SUCH AS RESETTLEMENT OF A VILLAGE OR LOSS OF REVENUE IF THE CANAL
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WAS BLOCKED DUE TO A NUCLEAR ACCIDENT' A COPY OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON ATOMIC ENERGY REPORT ON PL 93-513

WAS PROVIDED TO THE GROUP, BUT A DIRECT ANSWER TO THE QUESTION OF INDIRECT LIABILITY WAS RESERVED UNTIL FURTHER CLARIFICATION COULD BE OBTAINED. EL ARABY THEN MENTIONED MULTINATIONAL AGREEMENTS, SUCH AS FOR OUTER SPACE FOLLOWING THE RUSSIAN INCIDENT IN CANADA, AND ASKED WHY THE USG DID NOT APPROACH THE NPW PROBLEM THAT WAY. HE WAS TOLD THAT THIS WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE UNDER US LAW, WHICH DID NOT ALLOW THE DISCLOSURE OF TECHNICAL INFORMATION ON NPW'S.

F. AT THE END OF THE QUESTIONING PERIOD COPIES OF NAVAL SEA SYSTEM COMMAND REPORT NT-78-1 DATED FEBRUARY 1978 "ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AND DISPOSAL OF RADIOACTIVE WASTES FROM U.S. NAVAL NUCLEAR POWERED SHIPS AND THEIR SUPPORT FACILITIES" WERE PROVIDED TO THE GROUP. IT WAS SUGGESTED THAT MANY OF THE QUESTIONS WHICH HAD BEEN ASKED WERE ANSWERED IN THAT PUBLICATION. ONCE THE EGYPTIAN SIDE HAD STUDIED IT PERHAPS ANOTHER MEETING MIGHT BE CALLED TO TRY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS WHICH THE PUBLICATION MIGHT RAISE. PRIME MINISTER SULTAN AGREED AND CONCLUDED WITH "THE MOST IMPORTANT POINT IS THAT WE NEED EQUIPMENT". IT WAS AGREED A SECOND MEETING WOULD BE HELD 1800, MAY 3, AT DR EFFAT'S OFFICE TO DISCUSS STILL OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS, INCLUDING LIABILITY. EILTS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978CAIRO12170
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780191-0385
Format: TEL
From: CAIRO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780492/aaaadamz.tel
Line Count: 248
Litigation Code IDs:
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Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
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Office: ACTION PM
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 97463
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3074679
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NUCLEAR POWERED WARSHIP TRANSITS OF THE SUEZ CANAL
TAGS: OCLR, US, EG
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/ec097db6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014